

THESE, TOO, WERE UNSHACKLED

15 DRAMATIC STORIES FROM THE PACIFIC GARDEN MISSION

Adapted from the "Unshackled!" Radio Scripts by

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Chapter 14

It's Only Money - JACOB DUDLEY

JACOB DUDLEY was alone in the office wing of the clubhouse. As he reached for his key, he realized how silent a racetrack at night can be. But beyond the mahogany door, his private stock of liquor waited to cheer him and to keep him company and to help him forget this last fight with Ann. He slipped the key into the keyhole.

"There's a gun in your back, Dudley. Don't make a sound." The pressure in his back was not to be denied. The voice belonged to his long-time track-side acquaintance, Tony. They were alone in the black corridor.

"Go on. Open your office," Tony urged, nudging him with the gun. "I want to talk to you. Inside."

There was nothing else to do. He turned the key in the lock, pushed open the door, flicked on the lights. Tony stepped in quickly and closed the door behind them. "Now sit," he commanded. "And keep your hands on top the desk."

Jacob's footsteps made no sound as he crossed that thick-piled carpet to the desk. He swung around quickly. But the gun was still pointed at him. He sat down and faced the man who stood with his back against the door. "What's on your mind, Tony?"

The eyes above the gun studied him craftily. "Business. Big business. The organization thinks you've got a nice thing going here." Momentarily careless, Tony gestured with his gun to include all that Jacob Dudley owned and had invested his life in - the thick-piled carpet, the private bar, the office, the clubhouse, and beyond, of course, Jacob Dudley's racetrack.

"How'd you know I'd be down here tonight?" Jacob tried to stall.

"We've just been watching your house night after night, till you just happened to come back here - alone. We knew you wouldn't want your wife to be a widow lady."

Your wife! Ann! His thoughts whirled. If he and Ann hadn't quarreled, he wouldn't be here. Blame Ann for this, Ann and her strange ideas about religion. Blame Ann for this incredible

situation.

But Tony was not to be stalled. "This .38 in my hands says we're in. Now! Two lawyers ought to make it legal. And I got two outside in the car. That's right, Dudley. The organization wants in - to what you got here. Now you keep your hands on top your desk, while I signal them to come on in and transact business."

Tony stepped to the light switch. Off, on, twice more in rapid succession, and then on. Behind the desk, waiting, facing the gun, Jacob Dudley sweated - and lived a lifetime.

What turn in the road had brought him to this moment? How did he, blue-blood, thoroughbred aristocrat arrive at this point - threatened by a cheap racketeer?

Scene after scene flashed through his mind as he waited, trapped behind his desk, helpless, panic-stricken.

Jacob Dudley had been born in the bluegrass country of Kentucky. He was weaned on the color and excitement of Churchill Downs. As a boy, he knew no thrill greater than riding to the races with his Grandfather Dudley.

As he grew, horseracing and turf talk were in his blood. He lived horses. He breathed racing. And he idolized his Grandfather Dudley because his own father and mother had not inherited this fever.

"Jacob, listen to me, son. I know you love your grandfather; so do I," his father had said time and time again.

"You don't act like it," Jacob protested.

"I do love him. He's my own father. But I'm your father, and I say you can't hang around the race tracks with him!"

But the pull of the track had been stronger than any respect for father and mother. At sixteen, Jacob rebelled. One afternoon, at the paddock where his grandfather kept his horses, Jacob hunted up the trainer.

"How's Ginger Boy?"

"We're going to bring home the bacon with him, sure enough, Mr. Jacob." The trainer squatted on the stable floor and grinned up at Jacob.

"Well, I'm always willing to win a little. Sounds good to me." Jacob looked cautiously toward the door and then bent down. "Uh Jerry - suppose you could get me a bottle of whiskey?"

Jerry shook his head. "Whiskey, son? Does your daddy know you drink?"

"That's my problem. All I said was 'can you get some?'"

He got the whiskey and he got drunk. Trying to get upstairs to his own room, he fell over a table, smashed his mother's favorite lamp. His father helped him up to bed. He was too ashamed to repeat that kind of rebellion. He made up his mind that he wasn't going to let liquor get the best of him. He would keep it under control.

But at sixteen, his love of gambling had been out of control.

First, it was gambling at the race track on the horses. Then it was poker. And then it was anything at all, as long as it was gambling.

The delicious thrill of the unknown, the sweet taste of success, the freedom of spending the winnings! Anything - as long as it was gambling!

At twenty-five, he met Ann. From the beginning, he sensed that Ann was not his kind of woman. She frowned on gambling. She was very religious. But he loved her. He wanted to marry her.

Canoeing on the river one summer night, he proposed. "How about staking all your life on me, Ann honey?"

Even in the darkness, he could tell that she disapproved of the way he had said it. "Okay, okay. So you don't like gambling. Let's put it this way. Do you love me enough to marry me?"

Her voice came to him sweet and clear above the sound of the paddle rippling the water. "I love you more than any other human being in the world."

"Then let's get married."

"But . . ." There was a troubled sound in her voice. "But what?"

"Jacob, it's GOD."

"GOD!" He sliced the water with the paddle and the little canoe rocked.

The rest of what she said that night disturbed and confused him. "You don't believe in GOD, and I do. Don't you see how much trouble that could make?" When he tried to say there wasn't anything in the Bible that said a man and woman in love shouldn't be married, she said there was - "if one of them follows GOD and the other doesn't."

Finally he pled. "Don't you love me enough, Ann? Please"

At last he heard what he had been waiting for. "I do, Jacob. I love you with all my heart. I'll marry you anyway. And - let's do it right away - before GOD has a chance to stop me."

Jacob Dudley and Ann had been married right away. About a year later, Jacob's father died and left him some money. Although Jacob was sure it would have broken his father's heart, he pooled it with his latest winnings at the race track and set up his own race course.

With the money, he organized his own company. He designed and built a race track that he knew

was one of the best anywhere. And he named it Triangle Park after the sign that had always been good for him. Things went well.

Business at Triangle Park boomed.

But the rest of his life had not gone as well as the race track.

Something was wrong with his marriage. Ann was unhappy, and she placed the responsibility for her unhappiness directly at his feet.

One night he had come home late, feeling good after a few highballs. He burst into their bedroom full of cheer and an idea he couldn't wait to share. "Ann, old girl, you and me are going to take a real honeymoon like we didn't get when we were married." He stopped. Ann was on her knees beside the bed. And she was crying.

"Hey, what's the matter with you? I don't get it."

She went on sobbing. "I don't know how to make you get it."

He went over to her and tried to lift her up. "Come on. Get up. There. All right, you were praying. For me, I suppose. Listen, Ann, this GOD business is all right as long as it doesn't interfere with our life together. But when it begins to do that -"

What she said to him between sobs made very little sense.

Words like, "GOD isn't interfering with our life, Jacob. We're interfering with my life with GOD!" And, "I haven't prayed enough. Or else I haven't trusted enough. I ask GOD to penetrate your mind and your heart so you'll see what a big, deep black chasm there is between us, and then I get up and continue to worry."

He had had enough. He ended the conversation with a single fiat statement. "Religion is all right when you don't take it too far, Ann. I know you don't approve of my making money at the track, but it so happens that's my business. And I'm a success. You take care of GOD for both of us and I'll make the dough for both of us. That's fair enough."

It had seemed fair enough to him. Clearly, it had not been good enough for Ann. She seemed to withdraw from him a little more every day. She was always kind, but she wasn't really there with him. There was a barrier between them. It began to drive Jacob crazy. And although he had never had any trouble with alcohol before, he began to drink more than he ever had.

The last hour or so before he left his handsome office at the track, he turned to his private stock to strengthen himself for what used to be the happiest moment of the day - his return to Ann.

And at last, he hadn't cared whether he hurt her or not.

Sometimes he wanted to. He knew she didn't like him to drink. So he went home drunk more and more frequently. Ann was always there, looking hurt. But she was always loving, forgiving.

"Here, let me help you, Jacob. I'll untie your shoes. You have a knot in this one, darling."

Slumped in a chair, he laughed. "Why don't you pray about it? Don't you know GOD can untie knots . . ." He whistled tunelessly. "Just like that."

"O Jacob, don't."

"You don't have any more respect left for me at all, do you?"

Fresh out of respect for your husband. Treat him like a - a child." Through the liquor, his failure to understand her penetrated. Overwhelmed by what had happened to their marriage, he began to plead. "Ann, what can I do to make you respect me again? Just tell me, honey. I'll do anything. I'll even go to church with you."

Ann dropped his shoe on the floor and reached up and put her arms around him. She held him close. "Honey, do you want to?"

"I want to do anything that'll make you respect me again," he told her. "This Sunday, we'll go. I swear it."

Jacob Dudley had joined his wife's church that year. All the questions asked of him he had answered properly and in the affirmative. Then he gave heavily to the support of the church and all its projects. He tried. He cut his drinking to a minimum. And at home, things went along better. Ann and he did not discuss the race track business very often. In his own mind, he was coming in a winner at last.

But the night of their last quarrel, he had arrived home excited over an urging of generosity. "Ann, honey, remember that little two-year-old Get-Away?" He ignored the expression of distaste on Ann's face. "I unloaded her to a rich dame for a nice warm six thousand profit. So, you know what I'm going to do? I'm going to give it to the church. You and I are going to buy the biggest, most beautiful stained-glass window the church will hold. Maybe they'll even have to knock out part of the front wall. We'll both put our names at the bottom - in a triangle - my symbolic triangle - 'Ann and Jacob Dudley. To the glory of GOD' -like they say in church."

The dismay on her face stopped him "Hey, what's the matter?"

"But, Jacob, you couldn't! That - that kind of a thing would just be to the glory of us. Don't you see it?"

Within him, something broke. "Listen! Here's what I see. I see Jacob Dudley going to church every Sunday. I donate to everything they want money for. Now when I want to do something to the glory of GOD, you bawl me out."

"I'm not bawling you out, but Jacob, can't you see how selfish that would be? Our names - like that?" Ann walked away from him. When she turned, he could read heartbreak on her face, but he could not understand her words. "All this time, you haven't understood at all. You've only been living at a life with GOD in order to stay close to me."

And that was it. That was the final quarrel that catapulted Jacob Dudley down to the clubhouse. Convinced that he could never fathom his wife's religion, he sought refuge in the race track office. As he stared into the gun, he told himself bitterly that if he hadn't fought with Ann over church and GOD, he would never have entered that clubhouse alone. He would never have found himself staring at a gun and the face of three men who were about to force him to sign away the best part of his life - the race track profits.

When his signature was on the piece of paper and Tony and the two lawyers had retreated into the darkness, Jacob Dudley sat alone wondering what to do. His security was gone. Some men would go home to their wife. He couldn't. Some would have killed themselves. But he couldn't do that either.

Jacob Dudley went out of his office, locked the door, walked down the black clubhouse corridor. Then he went out into the night and disappeared.

For a year, he roomed from city to city. Now and then, he wrote to Ann to tell her he was safe. His income as secretary of the Turf Association continued, and he was confident that she could live on it. His own traveling expenses he picked up at the race tracks.

Wherever he went, Jacob Dudley sought out a church on Sunday morning. Somehow it made him feel closer to Ann. But sitting in church, he admitted to himself that his religion had really been Ann's religion, not his at all. He didn't know GOD. He had made all the professions of faith that were expected of him when he joined the church back home, but nothing had happened.

He didn't know GOD, had never reached Him. He confessed that now to himself. But still he didn't know why he hadn't found GOD. Nor did he know what to do next - to satisfy Ann, or himself, or GOD.

In September, he found himself in Chicago, and one hot night he wandered aimlessly through the Skid Row section. There he saw a church - a church different from any that he had attended on his wanderings. But he heard singing inside, and so he went in. It was the Pacific Garden Mission.

After the service, he defined his problem to the man who had done the preaching. He wasn't drunk. He didn't need food or clothes or a bed. But he did desperately need a new life, and he was determined to find it before he went back to his wife.

"That wife of yours - she must still be praying for you, Dudley," the man told him. "I think that's why you're here tonight."

"You make everything sound so simple," Jacob countered.

"It is," the man answered.

"If it's so simple, why don't I have what I'm looking for? I believe in CHRIST. I believe He died to atone for my sins. I've said that. I've confessed with my mouth, like you preached tonight. I've received Him. I've said all the things they tell me to say. And yet, I've missed the boat somewhere."

The man paused for a moment before he answered. "Dudley, you're holding something back. Look, suppose you bought a house. The owner turned over the deed when you paid your money and you were free to come and go as you pleased from then on in that house. But the former owner agreed to turn over the keys to you only if you allowed him to keep back one or two rooms in that house for himself. He wanted to keep his own things in those rooms. Keep them locked. Now wouldn't that disturb your making full and free use of that entire house? Wouldn't it, Dudley?"

Jacob Dudley started to say, "I don't get it." Then he changed his mind. He said nothing.

The man went on. "Honestly now, are you holding back a locked room against GOD? What about your love of gambling and playing the ponies - isn't that it?"

A verse from the evening's sermon echoed in Jacob's mind.

"For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it."

Suddenly, the pieces fitted together. Jacob Dudley saw all that he had been and all that he had missed being.

"All right, GOD, You win!" He shouted it. "Horse racing - gambling - the whole works. GOD, You can fix me up Your way. GOD, You call the shots from now on."

Within a short time, Jacob went home again. Ann took him back. Together they built a completely new life. It was based on a deep understanding - an agreement about church, GOD, JESUS CHRIST. And it was not supported by the winnings from a race track or any form of gambling.

In time, however, Jacob and Ann did buy their church window together. But it was not paid for by gambling money. And it was not stained glass. The window was just a plain glass storetype window and on it were these words, "Hope for all who enter here."

Jacob and Ann placed it in a building in which they had a special interest - their own City Rescue Mission.

~ end of chapter 14 ~
